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SHATTERED SKIES

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ADVENTURES

WHISPERS
OF THE
DARK MOTHER
5 of 6

CALL TO WAR
BY MICHAEL REYNOLDS



CALL TO WAR

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ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

The PC's have returned to Brighton to locate the mysterious hiding place of the deathless masters of the cult of Shub-Niggurath. When they arrive, the town is in utter chaos, as a sizeable warband of ogres led by an orc priest has sacked the town. Once the adventurers fight off the ogre horde, they pursue them through the dense, jungle like forests surrounding Bright Mountain and infiltrate the ogre base. After fighting their way through the camp, they discover the dark truth: the ogres plan to aid the release the Deathless Masters from their prison vault beneath Bright Mountain.

ADVENTURE ADVANCEMENT

At the start of the adventure, the characters should be 5th level. By the time they fight Gorshnop they should be level 6. For slow advancement tracks feel free to add an additional ogre, or skull-splitter orc to events that feature an orc or an ogre.

PART ONE: BRIGHTON BESIEGED!

The first portion of this adventure is "sandbox-style", where the players can choose from any of encounters to take on to rid the town of the ogres. There is a logical order, but that order can be thrown out entirely. Simply adjust NPC reactions to coincide with what has already happened. In Part One: the players enter Brighton, realize town is under attack, save people, and then track the ogres west through the fungus infested jungle surrounding Bright Mountain. Note: Encounter 5: Lord Mayor's Manor, should be saved for last.

The adventurers enter Brighton via the King's Road, while the fighting is happening on the opposite side of town. They see villagers fleeing in panicked terror and guards engaged in battle with an army of ogres in the fields. A second squad of ogres have broken through the guard's lines and are assaulting the town. The streets are filled with chaos and fires blaze unattended. Freed farm animals run wild.

Feel free to take liberties with the scene and add as much strife as is needed. In fact, the chaos in Brighton has brought another slumbering danger to the surface: denizens of the ancient Necropolis beneath the Temple of Eternal Slumber!

The ogres have come to soften the town's resolve and resources in advance of the return of their dark masters from their secret prison. The intention of this first section is to challenge the PCs and give them a chance to come up with creative solutions to the emergency conditions in Brighton. The ogres retreat as their numbers dwindle. Ogres, while

often depicted as dull and direct, display a cunning intelligence behind their attack. Keep that in mind when roleplaying them.

Random Happenings During Encounters

To spice up the first encounters in Part One roll a d20 on the following chart to increase the dynamic and chaotic feel of the battles. Don't roll for encounter 5.

Roll	Environmental Condition
1-5	Normal environmental condition. Fires and smoke are in the area, but not enough to affect the fight.
6-9	Flying boulders. Some ogre from out of sight is tossing huge chunks of rock through the town. Roll 1D6 for each combatant. On a 5-6, the combatant must make a DC 14 Reflex save or take 1D4 bludgeoning damage.
10-14	Smoke and flames. The smoke and flames in this area are exceptionally bad. -Treat as Smoke Inhalation. Increase CR of encounter by 1.
15-18	Fleeing Farm Animals. A pen of pigs, herd of cows, or pack of mules has broken free and is fleeing through this area. Treat all terrain as difficult terrain.
19-20	Collapsing Building. A building is collapsing into the street. It is easy to move out of the way. However, this may add complications due to citizens of the town being in the way.

ENCOUNTER 1: HIGH STREET AND MERCHANT'S ROW (CR 4)

Visions of pandemonium strike you as you enter Merchant's Row. A band of ogres is assaulting the shops. They seem to have taken a special interest in doing as much damage as possible to the buildings. Fires burn and the smell of smoke permeates the air. Nearby, loud, gruff laughter breaks through the screams of the townsfolk. An ogre is gleefully terrorizing the local butcher and gorging himself on the meats from the shop window.



PCs who succeed at a DC 10 Perception Skill check notice a second ogre standing atop the haberdashery across the street from the butcher shop partially obscured by the rising smoke.

Ogre (2) CR 3

XP 800

CE Large humanoid (giant)

Init -1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +5

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 8, flat-footed 17 (+4 armor, -1 Dex, +5 natural, -1 size)

hp 30 (4d8+12)

Fort +6, **Ref** +0, **Will** +3

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft. (40 ft. base)

Melee *greatclub* +7 (2d8+7)

Ranged *javelin* +1 (1d8+5)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

TACTICS

Before Combat The ogre attacking the butcher wields a large slab of beef (counts as a great club). He awaits the party to enter melee, cursing them in giant. The ogre on the roof attempts to hide from the approaching PC's in

the smoke from the surrounding fires (Stealth +0).

During Combat The ogre on the rooftop lobs slabs of roofing (1d6 +5 damage) from the building every 1d4 rounds, attempting to hide from view and tear apart more roofing. This proves not to be the most well thought out plan, since the roofing acts as his floor. After 1d4+2 rounds, the roof collapses and the ogre falls through. The ogre afterwards join the battle in melee, wielding a skinless corpse for 2d6+7 points of bludgeoning damage.

Morale When their prey turns out to be more dangerous than they thought, the rare moment of good sense seizes ogres; they flee if reduced to less than 5 hp.

STATISTICS

Str 21, **Dex** 8, **Con** 15, **Int** 6, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 7

Base Atk +3; **CMB** +9; **CMD** 18

Feats Iron Will, Toughness

Skills Climb +7, Perception +5

Languages Giant

Butcher Norvois (NPC Commoner 1)

If the PCs take time to sift through the rubble, they come across the town butcher. He is badly injured but thanks the group for saving him. He urges them to take

him to the Temple of Eternal Slumber. If someone in the group attempts to heal him, he accepts, but still insists he be taken to the temple. He offers his finest cuts of meat to the PC's for saving him.

Treasure: One of the ogres carries a fist-sized chunk of amber worth 500 gp in a sack.

AREA 2: HIGH ROAD (CR 6)

High Road is home to many shops. The ogres have dispatched lesser grunts to this part of town, and they are having fun terrorizing townsfolk. If the orcs spot the PCs, they immediately turn to them to satisfy their bloodlust.

High Road is one of Brighton's main thoroughfares with high class establishments. The Temple of Balanced Coin is located here. A squad of bluish-black skinned orcs chase citizens through the streets with lust in their piercing, crimson eyes.

Ashen Orc (20) CR 1/3

XP 135

Warrior 1

CE Medium humanoid (orc)

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception -1

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 11, flat-footed 16 (+5 armor, +1 Dex, +1 natural)

hp 7 (1d10+2 minus 1)

Fort +4, **Ref** +1, **Will** -1; +4 vs. undead attacks

Defensive Abilities Blessing of the Dark Mother, ferocity; **DR** 1/—

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee falchion +6 (2d4+6/18-20)

Ranged light crossbow +3 (1d8, 19-20/x2)

TACTICS

Before Combat The orcs have carved bloody unholy symbols of Shub-Niggurath into their chests. They have -1 hp from their max total, but they use the pain from this self-inflicted wound to charge their attacks, receiving +1 to attacks. This is reflected in their stat block.

During Combat Ashen orcs prefer to gang up on powerful opponents and dispatch them quickly in melee before moving on to lesser foes whenever possible.



Fanatics, they forgo traditional war-cries, instead screaming, "*Kill me! Make me ONE with Mother,*" as they charge into battle.

STATISTICS

Str 19, **Dex** 12, **Con** 14, **Int** 9, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 6

Base Atk +1; **CMB** +5; **CMD** 16

Feats Power Attack

Skills Intimidate +2

Languages Common, Orc

Combat Gear scale mail, falchion, light crossbow, 10 bolts; **Other Gear** sack of coins (8 gp, 12 sp, 25 cp)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Blessing of the Dark Mother (Su): Ashen orcs gain a +4 racial bonus on all saving throws made to resist any attack or effect created by an undead creature.

OPTIONAL ENCOUNTER (CR 6)

The following optional encounter takes place once along any road the PC's travel on during their defense of the town. Read or paraphrase the following:

Hanging like a clothesline across the road are the stretched remains of several human skins. Each body's face is stretched back and pinned with nails into a macabre grin. Sharpened bones stake their feet to the ground. Skinless, mutilated corpses litter the ground. Orcs hack away at the bodies laughing and smacking each other with severed limbs.

Chill stings the air and the fleshy curtain shudders as the skin-trophies tear themselves free. They float forward, embracing the now screaming orcs, wrapping around them like bed sheets. The orcs thrash against their attackers, but fail to overcome them. They fall hard and still to the ground. Moments later they rise and shamle forward.

Shredskin-possessed-orc CR 2

XP 600

NE Medium undead

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., detect undead; Perception +7

DEFENSE

AC 14, touch 13, flat-footed 12 (+2 Dex, +1 natural, +1 size)

hp 22 (4d8+4); *host body* **hp** 15

Fort +2, **Ref** +3, **Will** +4

Immune undead traits

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee *bite* +10 (1d4+4), 2 *claws* +10 (1d4+4)

Special Attacks control body

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 3rd; concentration +4)

Constant—*detect undead*

1/day—*command undead* (DC 13)

STATISTICS

Str 19, **Dex** 15, **Con** —, **Int** 6, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 13

Base Atk +3; **CMB** +8; **CMD** 18

Feats Agile Maneuvers, Weapon Finesse

Skills Fly +4, Perception +7, Stealth +13

Languages Common (can't speak)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Control Body (Su): A shredskin can wrap itself around a corpse (or a corporeal undead it controls using

command undead). When wrapping a host body in this way, the shredskin gains Strength 14 or the host body's Strength, whichever is higher, but cannot use its grab or enshroud abilities which doing so. Attacks targeted at the shredskin deal half damage to it and half damage to the host body; area attacks deal normal damage to both the shredskin and its host. If the host is destroyed, the shredskin unwraps itself as a free action on its next turn. A typical Medium corpse has 15 hit points for this purpose, while a Small corpse has 10 hit points. A shredskin can only use this ability on a generally humanoid-shaped creature (two arms, one head, humanoid torso) of Medium or Small size.

Shredskin CR 2

XP 600

NE Small undead

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., detect undead; Perception +7

DEFENSE

AC 14, touch 13, flat-footed 12 (+2 Dex, +1 natural, +1 size)

hp 22 (4d8+4)

Fort +2, **Ref** +3, **Will** +4

Defensive Abilities amorphous; **Immune** undead traits

OFFENSE

Speed fly 40 ft. (average)

Melee *bite* +6 (1d4), 2 *claws* +6 (1d4 plus grab)

Special Attacks constrict (1d4), control body, enshroud, grab (Medium)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 3rd; concentration +4)

Constant—*detect undead*

1/day—*command undead* (DC 13)

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 15, **Con** —, **Int** 6, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 13

Base Atk +3; **CMB** +4 (+8 grapple); **CMD** 14 (can't be tripped)

Feats Agile Maneuvers, Weapon Finesse

Skills Fly +4, Perception +7, Stealth +13

Languages Common (can't speak)

SQ compression

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Control Body (Su): A shredskin can wrap itself around a corpse (or a corporeal undead it controls using *command undead*). When wrapping a host body in this way, the shredskin gains Strength 14 or the host body's Strength, whichever is higher, but cannot use its grab or enshroud abilities which doing so. Attacks targeted at the shredskin deal half damage to it and half damage to the host body; area attacks deal normal damage to both the shredskin and its host. If the host is destroyed, the shredskin unwraps itself as a free action on its next turn.

A typical Medium corpse has 15 hit points for this purpose, while a Small corpse has 10 hit points. A shredskein can only use this ability on a generally humanoid-shaped creature (two arms, one head, humanoid torso) of Medium or Small size.

Enshroud (Ex): A shredskein that successfully pins a creature can wrap itself around that target like a shirt. The target gains the pinned condition, but the shredskein has neither the grappled or pinned condition, and can move itself and the target as if it controlled the target's body. The shredskein deals constrict damage to the target on its turn each round (no combat maneuver check needed). Attacking the shredskein while it's using this ability damages both it and the target as described in the control body ability. The shredskein can release the target as a free action.

AREA 3: THE ROOKERY (CR 6)

A group of ogres are attempting to chop down the rookery tower using their great clubs. The wizard Alhoon, and the pigeon-master, Elias are trapped up top. They have been fighting off the ogres using a combination of Alhoon's spells and alchemical vials dive-bombed by Elias' pigeons.

Magically augmented shouting, interspersed with a claxon sound, emanates from the limestone rookery in the center of town.

"HELP! They have us trapped! Please help us!"

A group of ogres attacks the tower, trapping the pigeon master and the town wizard inside. The calls for help are coming as much from the ogres below as the wizard's magic above. The ogres take turns darting away from the base of the tower, pounding on it with their clubs like lumberjacks chopping at a giant stone tree. Approaching, you see small explosions of flame erupting at their feet. Rookery pigeons circle above you, dropping alchemical bombs.

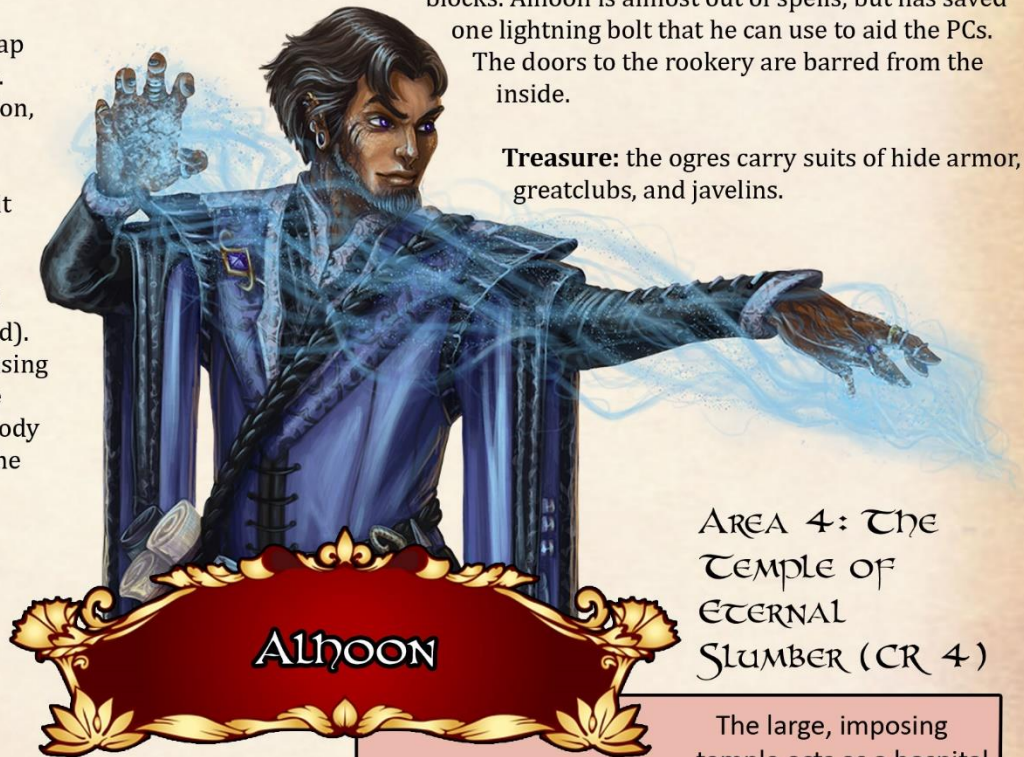
Creatures: Ogres (3): (see page 3; 30 hp each)

Development: The ogres here are in a disadvantageous position due to their fear of the "birds with fire eggs."

They are at -1 to hit and -1 AC from their normal stat blocks. Alhoon is almost out of spells, but has saved one lightning bolt that he can use to aid the PCs.

The doors to the rookery are barred from the inside.

Treasure: the ogres carry suits of hide armor, greatclubs, and javelins.



Alhoon

AREA 4: THE TEMPLE OF ETERNAL SLUMBER (CR 4)

The large, imposing temple acts as a hospital for the wounded. The building has taken a beating externally, with fresh fissures along the base of the outer walls facing you.

The ogres have damaged the temple. This tragedy can be overcome with some stone work and a few masons. However, the structural damage has also cracked the magical seals locking the underground necropolis that the Temple of Eternal Slumber was erected over to counteract. Protector Saylaa Perth is too busy tending the wounds of the fallen to also combat the undead spewing forth from the sinkhole in the floor.

Anyone who succeeds a DC 10 Perception skill check finds a trail of blood leading around the side of the temple. Lying face down is a dead ogre, missing one arm. The giant has half the skin of a fresh human corpse gripped in her remaining fist. On the ground, next to the ogre, is a half skinned human, flesh still clinging to muscle where the monster failed to tear it all off in one pull. In a belt pouch she has a potion of *cure moderate wounds* and a potion of *heroism*.

AREA 4.1: INSIDE THE TEMPLE

Entering the temple, you find a calmer environment than the chaos outside. Wounded line the walls and fill the pews. Protector Saylaa Perth, greets you with a somber look.

"It's been like this since the ogres came. We set up a hospital, but I am afraid that it's taking all I have just to tend to the wounded," Saylaa says. "Thank you for helping."

The temple shudders and a terrible moan fills the air. A large sinkhole opens in the floor and a bright flash of light erupts from behind the altar. A stone tablet on the far wall cracks and explodes in a shower of rubble and violet energy. The smell of flesh long rotten permeates from the crater.

"By the Maiden, No," Saylaa says, clutching her holy symbol.

Before she can offer any explanation, a group of zombies and skeletons rise from the sinkhole. The zombies move towards the wounded as the skeletons rush forward from the horde, swinging tarnished, bronze swords.

Medium Skeleton (8) CR 1/3

XP 135

NE Medium undead

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +0

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14 (+2 armor, +2 Dex, +2 natural)

hp 4 (1d8)

Fort +0, **Ref** +2, **Will** +2

DR 5/bludgeoning; **Immune** cold, undead traits

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee *broken longsword* +0 (1d8), *claw* -3 (1d4+1) or 2 *claws* +2 (1d4+2)

STATISTICS

Str 15, **Dex** 14, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +0; **CMB** +2; **CMD** 14

Feats Improved Initiative

Gear broken chain shirt, broken longsword

Zombie (16) CR 1/2

XP 200

NE Medium undead

Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +0

DEFENSE

AC 12, touch 10, flat-footed 12 (+2 natural)

hp 12 (2d8+3)

Fort +0, **Ref** +0, **Will** +3

DR 5/slashing; **Immune** undead traits

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee *slam* +4 (1d6+4)

STATISTICS

Str 17, **Dex** 10, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +1; **CMB** +4; **CMD** 14

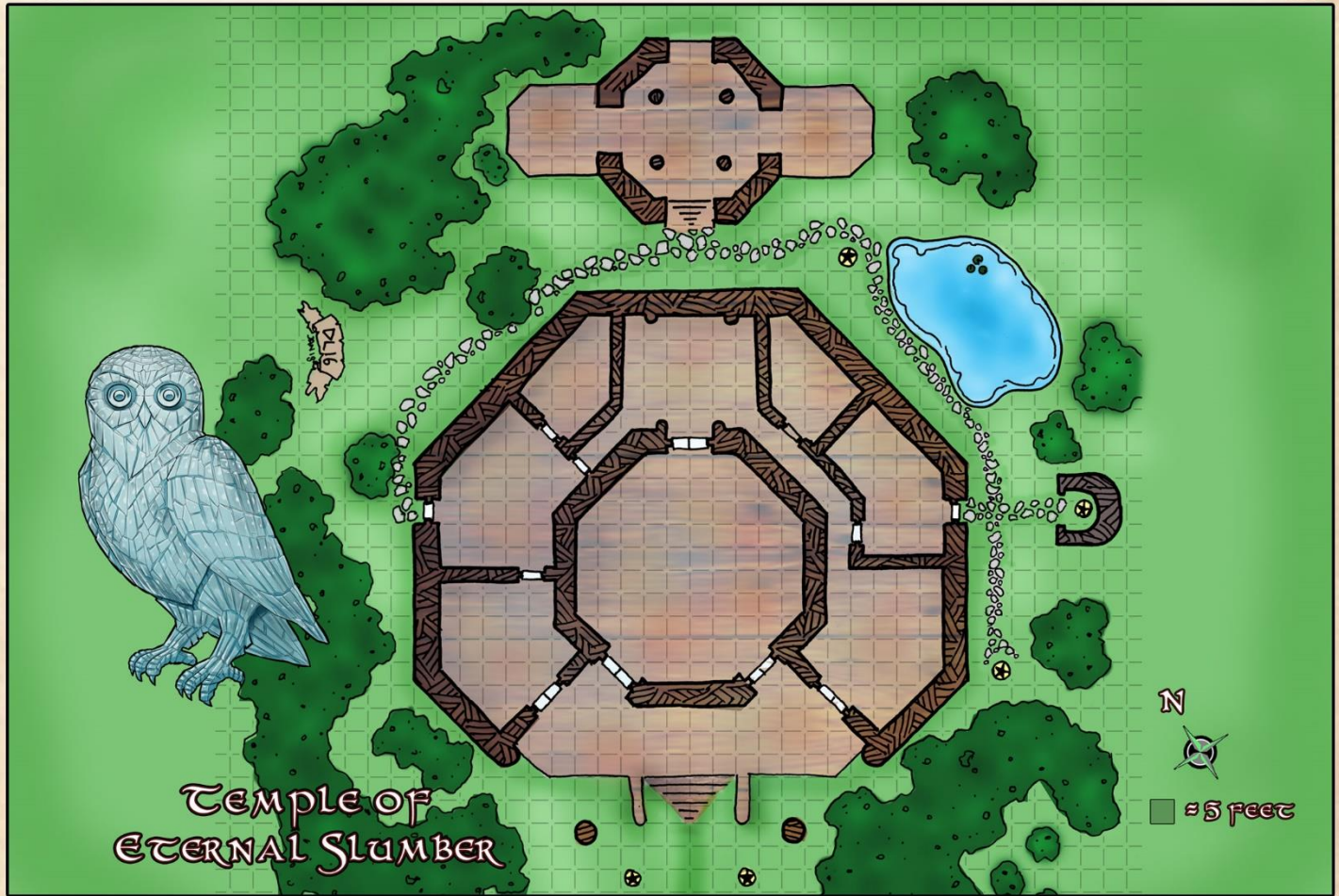
Feats Toughness

SQ staggered

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Staggered (Ex): Zombies have poor reflexes and can only perform a single move action or standard action each round (it has the staggered condition.) A zombie can move up to its speed and attack in the same round as a charge action.





Development: The Temple of Eternal Slumber was erected partly to sanctify an ancient necropolis in the area. Protector Perth's efforts suppressed the magics for years, but the ogre attack has broken the seals holding back the undead. She depleted her spells and abilities for the day during an earlier assault wave, so she and her clerics tend to the villagers, and do not enter combat.

Once the undead are defeated, Protector Perth awards the PC's with a wand of *cure light wounds* (50 charges) she retrieves from her private chambers.

AREA 5: LORD MAYOR'S MANOR (CR 6)

The Lord Mayor has been driven from his cliff top manor and now hangs for dear life over the cliff itself. He only has moments left before certain death. Standing above him laughing maniacally, is a mutated ogre, who has been leading the giants and orcs in their sack of the city.

A fiery explosion from high above the town catches your attention. As you look up to the cliff where the Lord Mayor's Manor is, you see part of the home engulfed in flames. You can make out the Lord Mayor fleeing toward the cliff's edge. Chasing him is a hulking ogre, a mass of flailing tentacles writhing from its neck and shoulders. The figure strikes the Lord Mayor, who goes tumbling over the cliff. His cloak catches on jagged, exposed roots breaching the cliff side. The mutant ogre laughs as he closes in for the kill.

Mutated Ogre barbarian 3 CR 6

XP 2,400

NE Large humanoid (giant)

Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +13; **Aura fear** 20' DC 14

DEFENSE

WHISPERS OF THE DARK MOTHER

PART FIVE

AC 17, touch 8, flat-footed 17 (+4 armor, +1 deflection, +5 natural, -2 rage, -1 size)

hp 88 (7 HD; 4d8+3d12+45)

Fort +14, Ref +3, Will +8

Defensive Abilities negative energy absorption, trap sense +1, uncanny dodge; immune fear effects

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft.

Melee +1 greataxe +15/+10 (3d6+14/×3)

Ranged javelin +5/+0 (1d8+9)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Special Attacks rage (12 rounds/day), rage powers (scent)

TACTICS

During Combat the mutated ogre rages and charges the PC's. He engages the strongest looking character first, faling back to drink his potions whenever he is reduced to half of his hit-point total or more.

Morale once his potions are exhausted, the ogre fights to the death

Base Statistics When he's not raging, the brute's statistics are AC 19, touch 10, flat-footed 19;

hp 74; **Fort** +12, **Will** +6; **Melee** +1 greataxe +13/+8 (3d6+11/×3); **Str** 25, **Con** 19;

CMB +14, **CMD** 25; **Skills** Climb +10.

STATISTICS

Str 29, **Dex** 10, **Con** 23, **Int** 6, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 5

Base Atk +6; **CMB** +16; **CMD** 25

Feats Cleave, Iron Will, Power

Attack, Skill Focus (Perception)

Skills Climb +12, Perception +13,

Survival +6

Languages Giant

SQ fast movement

Combat Gear potions of cure light wounds (4), potion of cure moderate wounds; **Other Gear** chain shirt, +1 greataxe, javelins (3), cloak of resistance +1, ring of protection +1, 77 gp

Negative energy absorption (Su): The mutated ogre heals 1 hit point for every 3 points of damage that negative energy attacks would otherwise deal; the mutated ogre gets no saving throw against negative energy effects).

Development: As the mutated ogre dies, he cries out "I am become as One with the Dark Mother!"



SAVING THE LORD MAYOR

Once the PC's engage the mutated ogre, the giant focuses on them until they, or it, is destroyed. The Lord Mayor's cloak will only hold for 6 rounds. Unless he is rescued before that time passes, his cloak tears free and he plummets down the cliff side to his death. Rescuing him awards the PC's xp as if they had overcome an additional CR 4 encounter.

PART ONE CONCLUSION:

About the same time the PC's finish at the Lord Mayor's manor, the town militia has succeeded in driving the remaining ogres and orcs from town. If the characters managed to rescue the Lord Mayor, he invites them into his home for a respite from the combat, asking them what they know about the invaders. Sergeant Uwaan Valaraa and Sheriff Byron Tate arrive on the scene soon thereafter. As servants busy themselves with repairs and housekeeping, the two officials begin to report to the Lord Mayor of their discoveries during battle. The army, Uwaan reports, was led by a giant female priest, wearing dirty fur robes. Tate adds that he heard subordinates refer to her as Gorshnop. He reports that she teleported away in a shower of bone and gore before his men could move in.

If the PC's tell about the Shub-Niggurath scarring on the orcs torsos, or of Corvun Baerg's plans at Bright Mountain, the Lord Mayor or Sergeant Valaraa suggests the characters lead a hunting party after Gorsnop.

Grateful merchants in town provide up to 500 gp each for the characters in supplies they may require in their pursuit of the ogres. The Lord Mayor, if he survives, rewards the characters with some of his personal treasure as thanks.

Treasure: A staff of minor arcana, necklace of fireballs type I, A potion of cure serious wounds, A scroll of breath of life, An all tools vest, pipes of the sewers, and 450 gold worth of material components for arcane and cleric spells. These components must be selected by the players at the time of awarding.

PART TWO: JUNGLE HILLS OF BRIGHT MOUNTAIN

The ogres travel east toward Bright Mountain. The trail of the army is easy to follow (DC 10 Survival or Perception skill check). After 20 miles, the tracks head into the thick, jungle forest with quartz-capped peak looming in the distance.

The overgrowth of the jungle hinders your travel. The trees form a thick canopy and the foliage is composed largely of vines and ferns. Corruption has turned the flora and fauna into repugnant, mutated versions of themselves. Rancid motes dance in the air and spongy fungus clings to the slick, sweaty-looking tree-trunks. The ground is choked in damp, fleshy moss that emits squishing-sucking moans with each step.

General Information about running the Jungle Hills:

The jungle is comprised of heavy undergrowth, becoming difficult terrain for the characters. However, the retreating ogres have stamped down a path that's much easier to travel on. By staying to the trail, the PC's will save hours in their pursuit. The GM is encouraged to familiarize herself with all the various elements of jungle terrain to enrich the dramatic aspect of the PC's exploration.

AREA 6: SIGNS OF A STRUGGLE (CR 6)

After pushing their way through the woods, the adventurers come to a clearing. Here, the trail the ogres left fills out to an almost churn of the ground. A tendriculous lies in wait for prey that might pass its way.

The forest gives way atop a small hill, though the verdant canopy still looms oppressively overhead. The earth below is churned and wet.

If the PC's succeed at a DC 15 Survival skill check they find giant-sized footprints circling around a strange fungus-covered tree. The tree is not a tree at all, but a tendriculous in disguise. Spotting it in time requires a DC 19 Perception skill check. If they fail to notice the creature, it surprises them, and attacks.

Tendriculos CR 6

XP 2,400

N Huge plant

Init +3; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +7

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 7, flat-footed 19 (–1 Dex, +12 natural, –2 size)

hp 76 (9d8+36); regeneration 10 (bludgeoning or fire)

Fort +10, **Ref** +4, **Will** +4

Immune acid, plant traits

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee *bite* +11 (2d6+7 plus grab), 2 *tentacles* +6 (1d6+3 plus grab)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

Special Attacks paralysis (3d6 rounds, DC 18), swallow whole (2d6 acid damage plus paralysis, AC 15, 7 hp)

STATISTICS

Str 24, **Dex** 9, **Con** 18, **Int** 3, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 3

Base Atk +6; **CMB** +15 (+19 grapple); **CMD** 24 (can't be tripped)

Feats Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Stealth)

Skills Perception +7, Stealth +1 (+9 in undergrowth); Racial Modifiers +8 Stealth in undergrowth

Languages Sylvan (cannot speak)

Treasure: Searching the area finds an ogre's sack containing the following: *A mithril shirt* (medium-sized), *potion of endure elements*, *potion of shield of faith*, *scroll of eagle's splendor*, *scroll of touch of the sea*, 4 cp, 5 sp, 50 gp.

AREA 7: IN THE MOTHERS CLUTCHES (CR 6)

The ogres traveled by a normally secluded pool and made camp, finding a clutch of unattended forest drake eggs. They ate the eggs, refreshed themselves in the pool, and then continued towards Bright Mountain. Later, when the drakes returned, they discovered their devoured eggs and flew into a rage. They hear the PC's approach and then hide to ambush them. They work together to bring prey down, one at a time.

They blame the PC's, the first creatures they have encountered since returning to their lair, for the death of their offspring. Enraged, they fight to the death.

Ahead, the ogre's tramped-down trail leads to a pool of clean water. A tree has been recently felled and set in front of the pool as a make shift bench.

A DC 17 Perception skill check spots the broken remains of the eggs. A DC 20 knowledge arcana check is enough to recognize them as belonging to forest drakes. In the thick foliage hides two forest drakes (Perception DC 19).

Forest Drake (2) CR 4

XP 1,200

LE Large dragon (earth)

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Perception +11

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 11, flat-footed 15 (+2 Dex, +6 natural, –1 size)

hp 42 (5d12+10)

Fort +6, **Ref** +6, **Will** +4

Immune acid, paralysis, sleep

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (average), swim 30 ft.

Melee *bite* +8 (1d8+4), *tail slap* +3 (1d8+2)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Special Attacks acidic cloud

STATISTICS

Str 19, **Dex** 14, **Con** 14, **Int** 9, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 12

Base Atk +5; **CMB** +10; **CMD** 22

Feats Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Perception)

Skills Fly +8, Intimidate +9, Perception +11, Stealth +6, Swim +20

Languages Draconic

SQ aquatic adaptation, speed surge

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Acidic Cloud (Su): A forest drake can, as a standard action, spit a ball of acid that bursts into a cloud on impact. This attack has a range of 60 feet and deals 4d6 points of acid damage (Reflex DC 14 half) to all creatures within the resulting 10-foot-radius spread. The cloud remains for 1d4 rounds once created, acting as a 10-foot-radius obscuring mist (it no longer causes damage), but a strong wind disperses it in a single round. Once a forest drake has used its acidic cloud breath, it cannot do so again for 1d6 rounds. The Reflex save is Constitution-based.

Aquatic Adaptation (Ex): A forest drake can breathe underwater indefinitely and can freely use its breath weapon and other abilities while underwater. The

acidic cloud created by that attack dissipates after 1 round if used underwater.

Speed Surge (Ex): Three times per day as a swift action, a forest drake may draw on its draconic heritage for a boost of strength and speed to take an additional move action in that round.

Treasure: Searching for the drake's lair does not take up much time. Doing so finds the following list of treasure: Carved stone idol (30 gp), assorted unworked gems worth 500 gp, gold candelabra with holy symbol of the Grey Maiden (200 gp), 3 ivory drinking horns with copper ends (60 gp each), masterwork spear, *potion of remove sickness*, *scroll of summon monster I* silver mask (75 gp), and 37 cp, 69 sp, 27 gp, 4 pp in coins.

AREA 8: IT'S A TRAP!

As the PC's get closer to the ogre camp, the jungle becomes more worked and traveled. The area has been seeded with two camouflaged pit traps just off the trampled down path. The ogres have affixed bells and bits of metal to clang as alarms should someone trip them.

Plodding through the thick undergrowth, you find the brush has been beaten down and cut away. Effigies of skull, fur, and bone surround you, hanging from the trees. Ahead, an ogre's skull is tied to a post with thick, frayed rope. Beyond the post, smoke curls into the sky just inside the tree line.

If the PC's leave the path on their approach to the encampment, the risk falling into pit traps and alerting the two ogre sentries from area 9. One pit is located 100 yards from the camp's entrance, the other is 20 feet from it.

Camouflaged Pit Trap CR 3

Type mechanical; **Perception** DC 25; **Disable Device** DC 20

Trigger: location; **Reset:** manual

Effect 30-ft.-deep pit (3d6 falling damage); DC 20 Reflex avoids; **multiple targets** (all targets in a 10-ft.-square area).

Development: These pits are connected to alarms bells that will ring out if the traps are triggered. This brings the ogres from Area 9 in **Part Three**. They are eager to take the PC's captives to sacrifice to their dark masters.

Treasure: Searching the pit the PC's find 27 cp, a gold signet ring (2 gp).

PART THREE: THE OGRE CAMP

The party finishes their trek through the jungle and comes upon the ogre's encampment. Before they can make their way into the settlement, they encounter a pair of sentries and a repulsive swarm comprised of undigested human flesh! When they arrive at the camp's epicenter, they find the remaining orcs and ogres entranced in an occult ritual. The spell culminates in their combined deaths sending a bolt of dark energy to Bright Mountain, and summoning forth a blood demon that fights alongside the murderous ogre Gorsnop.

If the PC's are beginning part three as prisoners of the ogres (from becoming trapped in part two) they are each placed into a bamboo cage and raised onto a pole lining the camp's paths. The cage lock can be opened with a DC 20 disable device skill check. Each bamboo bar has a hardness of 2 and 5 hp. A small character can squeeze through a space caused by breaking one bamboo bar, and a medium character can squeeze through a space caused by breaking two bars. If they begin part three by escaping the cages, skip the ogre sentry encounter, awarding xp instead to the PC's for breaking free.

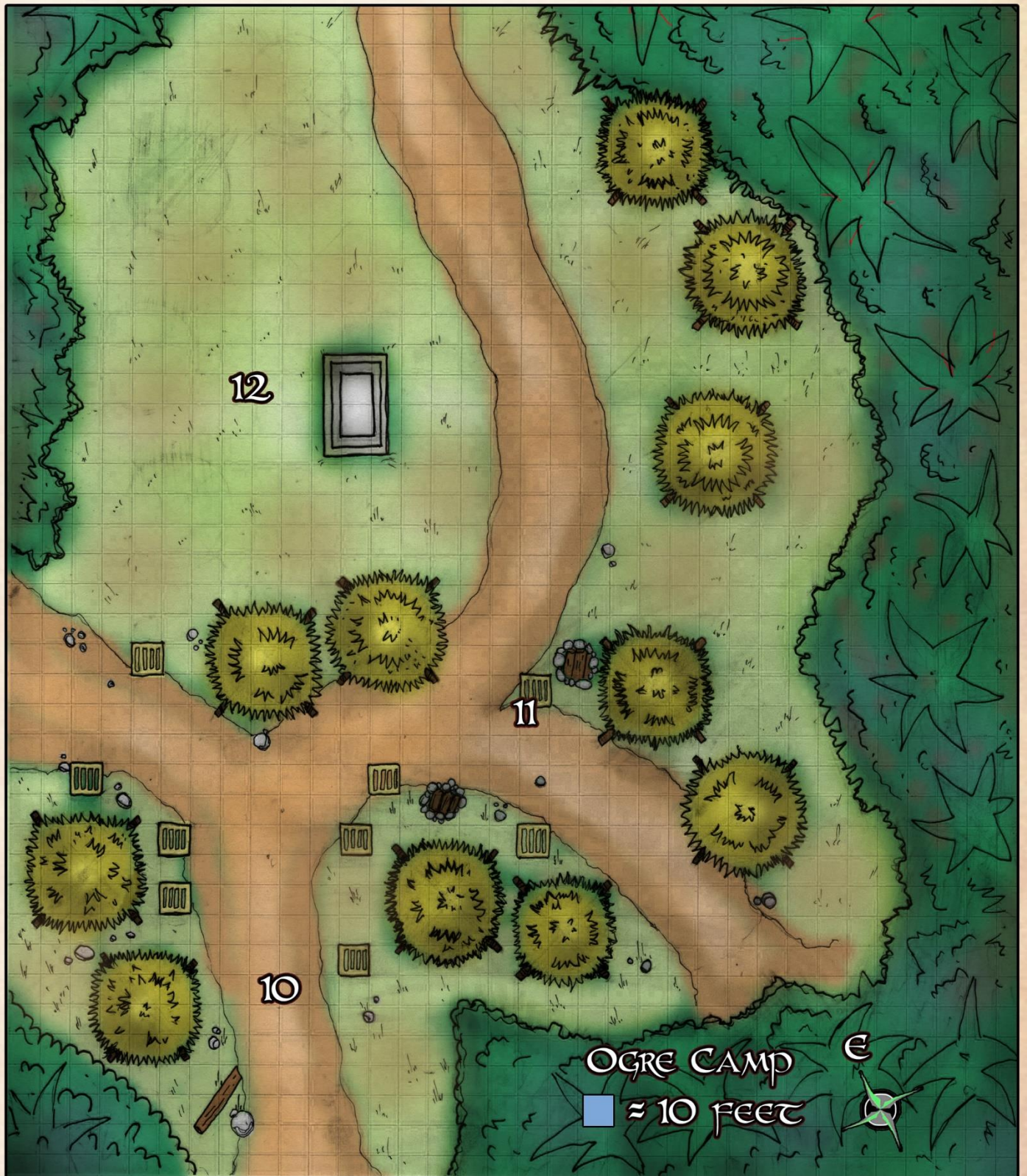
The buildings in the ogre village are 15' tall round huts made mostly of wood and mud. They have 0 hardness and 20 hp each, with a Break DC of 23.

As the party approaches the ogre camp, read or paraphrase the following.

"Giant thatched huts bound together with ugly vines breaches the jungle ahead. Their walls teem with thumb-sized beetles and loud buzzing flies. Fern-covered hills dot the camp and bamboo cages dangle from poles lining the path winding towards its center."

WHISPERS OF THE DARK MOTHER

PART FIVE



AREA 9: PATROLS (CR 6)

Two ogre sentries are patrolling the camp's path. They are lazy and not worried about any possible intruders. They are not concealing their presence and loudly discuss being rewarded by Gorshnop for their service. One believes they will be betrayed and should kill the priest when she's finished her ritual. Just before the PC's enter the encampment, read or paraphrase the following.

Two ogres round the end of one building. Both have vestigial second heads that hang limply from their shoulders. They are carrying greatclubs comprised of bones bound together with thick, leathery flesh. They are conversing in loud clipped tones, bordering on argument.

Ogre Sentries (2) CR 4

XP 1,200

Ogre rogue 3

CE Large humanoid (giant)

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +10

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 10, flat-footed 18 (+4 armor, +1 Dex, +5 natural, -1 size)

hp 52 (7d8+21)

Fort +8, **Ref** +5, **Will** +2

Defensive Abilities evasion, trap sense +1

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee *mwk greatclub* +12 (2d8+10)

Ranged javelin +5 (1d8+7)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Special Attacks sneak attack +2d6

STATISTICS

Str 25, **Dex** 12, **Con** 17, **Int** 8, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 5

Base Atk +5; **CMB** +13; **CMD** 24

Feats Improved Initiative, Night Stalker, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Stealth)

Skills Acrobatics +11, Climb +17, Disable Device +2, Perception +10, Stealth +10 (+14 in dim light or darkness)

Languages Giant

SQ rogue talents (fast stealth), trapfinding +1

Combat Gear potion of *cure moderate wounds*, potion of *elixir of hiding*, *wasp nest of swarming*;

Other Gear +1 studded leather, javelins (3), *mwk greatclub*, *feather token* (tree), 16 gp

Treasure: Searching the ogres finds large hide armor (2), greatclub (2), 4 javelins.

It is possible to avoid combat with the sentries. They bicker between themselves in Giant about Gorshnop. One is excited to be physically rewarded by the cleric while the other believes she plans to betray them. If this rift can be played up by the PC's, and their attitudes adjusted with a successful DC 20 Diplomacy skill check, the ogres ally with them to defeat Gorshnop. If they fight each other or fight together, award the PC's xp for a CR 6 encounter.

AREA 10: UNDIGESTED PRISONERS (CR 6)

There are cages scattered throughout the village. Only one contains a living prisoner.

Lining the pathway are crude, locked cages suspended from thick poles. Corpses swarming with maggots and flies occupy each, their bellies torn open, and their faces contorted in agony and horror. A few of the bodies have emulsified, having dropped chunks of gore into heaps below their cage.

As the PC's approach to investigate, the gore heaps shudder, and shamle forward to attack. One is an Undigested Swarm, but 5 others are solitary Undigested.

Undigested Swarm CR 5

XP 1,600

NE Tiny undead (swarm)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +8

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 16, flat-footed 13 (+3 Dex, +1 dodge, +1 natural, +2 size)

hp 54 (12d8)

Fort +4, **Ref** +9, **Will** +9

Defensive Abilities amorphous, swarm traits;

Immune undead traits; **Resist** acid 10

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., climb 20 ft., swim 20 ft.

Melee *swarm* (3d6 plus digest and distraction)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.

Special Attacks digest, distraction (DC 16)

STATISTICS

Str 4, **Dex** 16, **Con** —, **Int** 3, **Wis** 9, **Cha** 11

Base Atk +9; **CMB** —; **CMD** —

Feats Dodge, Improved Iron Will, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Skill Focus (Perception)

Skills Climb +14, Perception +8, Stealth +17, Swim +14

Languages Common (can't speak)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Digest (Ex): A target that takes swarm damage from an undigested swarm is covered in acidic slime and must succeed at a DC 16 Reflex save or take 2d6 points of acid damage for 1d4 rounds at the start of its turn. An affected creature can make a new save as a full-round action. Washing off the acid grants a +4 bonus on this save. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Undigested (5) CR 1/4

XP 100

NE Tiny undead

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +6

DEFENSE

AC 13, touch 13, flat-footed 12 (+1 Dex, +2 size)

hp 9 (2d8)

Fort +0, **Ref** +1, **Will** +1

Defensive Abilities amorphous; **Immune** undead traits; **Resist** acid 5

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., climb 20 ft., swim 20 ft.

Melee bite +3 (1d3–3 plus 1 acid)

Space 2-1/2 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.

STATISTICS

Str 4, **Dex** 12, **Con** —, **Int** 3, **Wis** 9, **Cha** 11

Base Atk +1; **CMB** +0; **CMD** 7 (can't be tripped)

Feats Skill Focus (Perception), Weapon Finesse B

Skills Climb +9, Perception +6, Stealth +13, Swim +9

Languages Common (can't speak)

Development: If the PC's began part three locked in a cage, this is the first encounter they have followed by the sentries from area 9.

AREA 11 "LUCKY" SURVIVOR (CR 4)

A man sits in the corner of the cage, cradling a swollen, distended belly in his filthy, skeletal arms. Madness shines in his eyes as bright as torches when he sees you.

"Please...kill me," he exposes his stomach, and a single bulge moves across it, pressing hard from within. He winces in pain, his teeth clenched tight.

. This is Roupert, a villager from Brighton whose gone missing for nearly nine months. Rumors in town attributed his absence to the mysterious Beast of Bright Mountain, causing his wife to abandon Brighton for Griffonport. Roupert does not leave the cage if freed. If offered a weapon, he immediately tries to take his own life, pleading with the Grey Maiden to banish him to the darkest pits along with what is inside him.

He answers the following questions.

Who Are you?

My name is Roupert... I used to live in Brighton.

Why do you want to die?

"Look at the other bodies... they were hosts like me. They gave birth to...things. I DON'T WANT MY LAST ACT TO BE BRINGING ANOTHER MONSTER INTO THE WORLD!"

Can we help you?

I... I don't know.

What happened to you?

"I'm pregnant...it was unspeakable... unwholesome.... evil."

What do you mean pregnant?"

"Kill me now before it's too late!"

Development: A *detect magic* spell cast on Roupert reveals a faint necromantic aura. A *remove curse* spell followed by divine healing banishes the festering thing from within him. Insane, Roupert's Wisdom score has been drained to 1 from his horrifying experience. Returning him to full health (an arduous task) rewards the PC's as if they had overcome a CR 4 encounter.

AREA 12: A BLOODY BETRAYAL

Gorshnop, the Visceral is in the center of town leading a profane ritual as the party approaches. The remaining ogres and orcs are locked in a trance and magically connected by a visible arc of black and violet energy. As soon as she sees the party, she lets out a great laugh as the ritual ends. Read or paraphrase the following.

The center of the village is dominated by a huge profane altar upon which lies the remains of a recent blood sacrifice. Standing behind is the ogre

cleric, Gorshnop, her hands raised in ecstatic prayer. Surrounding the altar are the remaining ogres and orcs of the army. They are swaying in unison and chanting, as crackling violet-black energy leaps between their heads.

Upon seeing you, Gorshnop laughs and drops her arms. She screams in manic glee.

"You are too late! The Deathless Masters are free! Praise the Skinless One! Praise Corvun Baerg! Iä Iä Shub-Niggurath!"

The arcing energy traveling between the supplicants collects into a great sphere and explodes, soaring in a flat beam of foul light toward Bright Mountain. The blast throws the orc and ogres to the ground, froth and blood gushing from their anguished jaws. The gory fluid begins slithering from the dying army towards the altar and a laughing Gorshnop.

Gorshnop CR 6

XP 2,400

Ogre cleric of Shub-Niggurath 4

CE Large humanoid (giant)

Init -2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +9

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 7, flat-footed 19

(+6 armor, -2 Dex, +6

natural, -1 size)

hp 75 (8d8+40)

Fort +11, **Ref** -1, **Will** +7

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 human bane

maul +12/+6 (3d6+14/x3)

Ranged javelin +1 (1d8+8)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Special Attacks channel negative energy 1/day (DC 10, 2d6)

Domain Spell-Like Abilities (CL 4th; concentration +5)

4/day—*enlarge*; 1/day— it came from beyond;

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 2nd; concentration +3)

2nd— *cat's curse* (DC 13), *cure moderate wounds*, *summon monster II* D

1st—*black goat's blessing*, *cure light wounds*, *divine favor*, *enlarge person D*, *murderous command* (DC 12)

0 (at will)—*create water*, *detect magic*, *mending*, *stabilize*

D domain spell; **Domains** (Void) Dark Tapestry, (Plant) Growth

TACTICS

During combat Gorshnop begins combat by casting *black goat's blessing* on herself. She then engages the PC's in combat, using power attack, and her *enlarge* domain power to become huge-sized, and her channeling force feat to add 2 force damage to her following three maul attacks. She flanks opponents with the blood demon whenever possible.

Morale seeking favor from the Dark Mother, Gorshnop fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 25, **Dex** 6, **Con** 20, **Int** 8, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 7

Base Atk +6/+1; **CMB** +12; **CMD** 20

Feats Channeling Force, Combat Casting, Iron Will, Power Attack

Skills Perception +9, Spellcraft +5, Knowledge (religion) +4

Languages Giant

Combat Gear potion of *cure moderate wounds*, potion of *invisibility*, scroll of *cure moderate wounds*, alchemist's fire (2); **Other Gear** +1 human bane maul, mwk breastplate,

javelins (3), *amulet of natural armor* +1, unholy symbol, 157 gp

Enlarge (Su): As a swift action, you can enlarge yourself for 1 round, as if you were the target of the *enlarge person* spell. You can use this ability a number of times per day equal to 3 + your Wisdom modifier.

It Came from Beyond (Su): Once per day, when you cast a summoning spell, any one creature you summon is more powerful than normal. The creature



gains the advanced creature simple template. If you summon more than one creature with a spell, only one of the summoned creatures gains the *advanced creature* simple template. A summoned creature that gains the advanced creature simple template in this manner appears unnervingly deformed or unnaturally hideous, bringing with it a whiff of the emptiness of the void. This ability works only on spells you cast as a cleric—it does not work on spellcasting abilities gained from any other spellcasting classes you might have.

Advanced Babau (blood-demon) CR 6

XP 2,400

CE Medium outsider (chaotic, demon, evil, extraplanar)

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., see invisibility; Perception +21

DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 13, flat-footed 20 (+3 Dex, +10 natural)

hp 87 (7d10+49)

Fort +12, **Ref** +8, **Will** +7

Defensive Abilities protective slime; **DR** 10/cold iron or good; **Immune** electricity, poison; **Resist** acid 10, cold 10, fire 10; **SR** 17

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee 2 *claws* +14 (1d6+7), *bite* +14 (1d6+7) or

longspear +14/+9 (1d8+9/×3), *bite* +9 (1d6+4)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft. (10 ft. with longspear)

Special Attacks sneak attack +2d6

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 7th)

Constant—*see invisibility*

At will—*darkness, dispel magic*

TACTICS

During Combat the blood demon uses its longspear against opponents, flanking with Gorshnop whenever possible to employ sneak attack.

STATISTICS

Str 25, **Dex** 17, **Con** 24, **Int** 18, **Wis** 17, **Cha** 20

Base Atk +7; **CMB** +14; **CMD** 27

Feats Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Skill Focus (Stealth)

Skills Acrobatics +13, Climb +14, Disable Device +13, Escape Artist +13, Perception +21, Sense Motive +13, Sleight of Hand +13, Stealth +24; Racial Modifiers +10 Perception, +10 Stealth

Languages Abyssal, Celestial, Draconic; telepathy 100 ft.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Protective Slime (Su): A layer of acidic slime coats a babau's skin. Any creature that strikes a babau with a

natural attack or unarmed strike takes 1d8 points of acid damage from this slime if it fails a DC 18 Reflex save. A creature that strikes a babau with a melee weapon must make a DC 18 Reflex save or the weapon takes 1d8 points of acid damage; if this damage penetrates the weapon's hardness, the weapon gains the broken condition. Ammunition that strikes a babau is automatically destroyed after it inflicts its damage.

ADVENTURE CONCLUSION

After defeating Gorshnop and the demon, the PC's discover a cave tunnel that leads into Bright Mountain. They can return Roupert to Brighton and resupply if they so desire before the final battle against the Skinless One and his deathless masters. After searching the encampment, they find the following treasure in various huts: +1 morningstar, bag of holding type II, wand of see invisibility, a ring of spell knowledge II, and 20 cp, 61 sp, 176 gp, 261 pp in scattered coins.

The adventure concludes in *Beasts of Bright Mountain* available soon wherever you purchase electronic gaming materials.

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Rullux

God of Treachery, Violence, and War

Alignment: Lawful Evil

Domains: Destruction, Evil, Law, Strength, War

Subdomains: Blood, Ferocity, Rage

Symbol: A winged battle-helm featuring a single crimson eye.

Garb: Gray or red clothing, black armor

Favored Weapon: Battleaxe

Worship and Holidays: Priests of Rullux hold a new holy day every year to commemorate the bloodiest battle of the past year. The end of autumn also marks the Day of Conquest, when Rullux slew his hated brother Rael.

Typical Worshipers: Corrupt politicians, cruel warriors, tyrants, giants

Center of Worship: Rogaard, giant tribes

Description: Born of the union between Amaura and Krokaar, Rullux is a deity who has fully embraced the destructive nature of his father. Appearing as a fierce battleaxe-wielding ettin, Rullux sees strength as the ultimate gift and oppression of the weak as the only true purity in life.

Rullux long battled with his brother Rael, with the former always looking down on the latter's emphasis on honor. In Rullux's eyes, ethics are an unnecessary handicap that mortals and gods alike hinder themselves with. His clergy points to the fact that he successfully betrayed and murdered his brother as proof that his philosophy is the superior one. That his betrayal led to the rise of Hastroi, god of valor, is irrelevant to Rullux's worshipers. To the faithful, Hastroi is but a child, unworthy of respect and ultimately doomed to the same fate that his predecessor suffered.

Originally a Rogaarvan deity, Rullux's faith spread throughout the west following the fall of that empire. Believing that the empire fell due to the freedoms afforded to the weak, the people of Rogaard made Rullux's faith the state religion. The current king, Olaf Rogaarson, is strongly devoted to the god of violence and keeps his armies training constantly on brutal campaigns so that they can be ready for the worst of conditions.

The Church: The clergy of Rullux organize themselves into militarized units that value discipline and unquestioning loyalty above all else. Orders received from a superior are expected to be carried out immediately and without question. Those who fail in this regard receive swift punishment. Some high-ranking members of the church occasionally give their underlings orders that



seem to make little tactical sense, such as risking a large number of soldiers on an unnecessary patrol, or which seem extremely trivial, such as trimming the nails on one hand to a certain length. These orders are often given for the sole purpose of measuring a priest's loyalty.

To many outsiders, Rullux's focus on carnage and bloodshed seems to have little rhyme or reason. In truth, the church acts in a calculated manner, taking actions that create the maximum amount of violence and strife.

The inner workings of the church are kept secret from outsiders, for the faithful know that knowledge becomes more powerful when it can be kept from an enemy. Once a person is a member of the church, they are considered loyal to Rullux for life – to step away from the faith is to risk a very violent end.

Temples and Shrines: Despite its reputation as an uncaring, heavily militarized unit, the church of Rullux engages in a great many charitable endeavors. Churches offer meals and shelter to the homeless, and many double as orphanages. Those who partake of the church's kindness receive an education on historical and practical matters that are heavily tinted by the biases of the church. The faithful know well that if the faith can control the messages reaching the young, poor, and unfortunate, it is assured to receive plenty of followers as each new generation comes of age.

Every temple dedicated to Rullux has a dojo or training yard. These areas are well-kempt and free of unintended obstacles, although combat dummies and temporary barricades might be brought out for certain exercises.

In addition to formal houses of worship, traveling priests bring idols, prayer beads, and a small collection of holy texts wherever they go. This allows them to set up a makeshift shrine at a moment's notice, which is

especially useful during military campaigns where frequent movement is a fact of life.

A Priest's Role: Priests of Rullux begin their day with rigorous, contemplative exercise one hour before dawn. They pray for their spells as the sun rises. Clerics of Rullux can also regain their spells one additional time per day if they spend an hour praying within an active battle with more than one hundred participants.

Rullux accepts living sacrifices, preferring the blood of humanoids to animals. However, the church is careful not to make human sacrifices in areas where such acts are illegal. In some areas of Rogaard, the church works with the government to perform ceremonial rites on inmates slated for execution.

All members of Rullux's faithful must live by the following tenets:

- *Obey all orders handed down by a superior, not matter what they are,*
- *Show no mercy to enemies on a battlefield,*
- *Demonstrate the inherent flaws in codes of honor and chivalry,*
- *Oppose the faithful of Hastroi, killing them when possible.*

In Rogaard, Rullux's religion uses its connections within the government to ensure that citizens embrace these philosophies, even if they are not formal members of the church.

Adventurers: Most adventurers who worship Rullux have a martial bent, with clerics and fighters among the most numerous. Barbarians often embrace the Lord of War as well, and the clergy sees them as useful tools despite their undisciplined nature. Fallen paladins frequently seek out Rullux as a new patron, and the church is eager to accept such champions.

The church encourages its clerics to train in martial and sometimes even exotic weaponry so they can take better advantage of their foes on the battlefield. Many clerics also train in the use of heavy armor, while others rely on their defensive spells to protect themselves on the field of battle.

Clothing: Black is Rullux's favored color, with many of his followers choosing it for both armor and shields. In addition, red is seen as a holy color, as it is reminiscent of spilled blood. Followers of Rullux do not clean their weapons or armor until all foreseen combat has ended for the day. In ceremonies that require priests to remove armor, black robes with red trim and patterns are the preferred garb.

Holy Texts: Rullux's holy texts are mostly extensive accounts of battles the god took part in. The crowning saga is the Victory of the Black, which revolves around the plotting and betrayal that led to Rael's slaughter. The climax of this battle is recounted during special ceremonies and holy days, lest Rullux's followers ever forget the power of unbridled bloodlust.

Holidays: Each church keeps track of major battles in its region during the course of a year. At the close of the year, priests mark the day of the bloodiest battle. That date becomes a time of feasting and worship in the next year.

The last day of autumn marks the Day of Conquest, which commemorates Rullux's ultimate victory over his brother. On this day, new initiates enter the church while the existing faithful pray for enhanced strength, durability, and combat ability. Mentioning Hastroi during this time is frowned upon at best.



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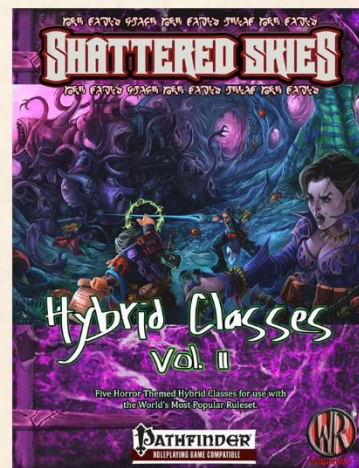
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